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TROUT UNLIMITED

Mr. Paul E. Stacey
Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse
Planning and Standards Division
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

January 31, 2010

Support of the Proposed Stream Flow Standards and Regulations

Hello, Mr. Stacey,

As a long-time Weston resident and member of the Nutmeg Chapter of Trout Unlimited, I am writing to express my support for the Proposed Stream Flow Standards and Regulations.

You will be seeing a number of letters from other residents who are members of various groups in support of these standards and regulations. Please understand that I am personally an deeply committed to the protection of our state watersheds and the quality of life and recreational opportunities they support.

Given the 40 years since Connecticut's regulations were last modified, the time is now to implement stream flow standards which will help preserve and improve the state's rivers and streams while providing protection to water supplies for human needs.

The state legislature recognized this fact in 2005, and took action to address the many gaps in our state's stream flow regulations.

Water is a public resource. It belongs to the residents of Connecticut and must be protected and preserved for human uses, but also for ecological health. There is plenty of water to go around, if managed correctly, and these regulations will help lead the way to improved water management in the state.

But the current regulations do not adequately protect the fragile ecology of our rivers and streams.

Rivers in Connecticut already face an abundance of threats from development, overconsumption, poor water management, pollution and other factors. The proposed regulations will ensure that a consistent, natural flow will exist in all of Connecticut's rivers and streams, providing the needed habitat to allow trout and other species to survive and thrive.

That the proposed regulations will apply to all rivers in Connecticut is a major step in protecting the health of our rivers and streams.

The proposed flow requirements also take into account the natural high and low flow periods present in any given year, and recognize that water releases must be made to more closely match these naturally occurring cycles. Such natural flows will have a significant impact on the quality and health of the ecosystem.

Also crucial to the success of the proposed regulations is the inclusion of standards for groundwater withdrawal.

The majority of us depend on groundwater for drinking and other uses, putting enormous pressure on groundwater reserves and drawing resources from those streams that support wild trout.

It is important to ensure that groundwater withdrawals do not result in flow reductions in nearby streams, or even worse, the complete drying out of a streambed, which has been known to happen.

I am pleased to see that a classification process is included in the proposed regulations that would be conducted over five years, allowing ample opportunity for public discourse and input. It is important that all voices are heard during this classification period.

It is also encouraging that the proposed regulations will allow local water users to work with conservation groups, municipal officials and the state to develop individual flow management plans which may be better suited for the particular needs of their communities and the specific environmental conditions of the region.

And the proposed regulations would allow for emergency takings of after above and beyond the standard in case of drought or other emergency.

But there are areas where the proposed regulations should be strengthened, particularly when it comes to urban rivers which will likely be designated as Class 4 rivers.

It is my understanding that such a classification will strip virtually all of the stream flow protections from such rivers, severely limiting any chance that such streams can remain viable habitat for trout.

Just as the proposed regulations recognize that a one-size fits all approach is not the best solution and encourage individual flow management plans, they must also recognize that all urban rivers are not the same, and that even degraded rivers can be rehabilitated and restored. At the least, I encourage you to put in place minimum standards, or a sliding scale within the Class 4 designation that would ensure the river's current health and level of aquatic life is sustained while measures are taken to improve the habitat further.

As an active and involved Trout Unlimited member, I know that restoration efforts can be successful at improving rivers throughout the state. I know that there is a strong desire to protect our rivers and a will to work together, as conservationists, to work to restore them.

Please allow us the opportunity to make such improvements in our urban streams. Class 4 rivers can be brought back, but we need the water flows to be there to sustain the current level of life and allow for upstream passage once we have improved the habitat.

The Proposed Stream Flow Standards and Regulations represent an important step in ensuring an abundant supply of water for human use while protecting the ecological needs and recreational enjoyment of Connecticut's rivers and streams.

Water sustains my home from a 485-foot well in my front yard. It babbles through nearby brooks and rivers and sustains wildlife and magnificent pockets of wildness all around us. And it provides a necessary balance between natural and man-made things.

Please do your best to maintain this balance for all Connecticut residents to enjoy.

Sincerely,

Eugene F. Quinn
Weston

Member
Trout Unlimited
Nutmeg Chapter